5: Nicolaisen E-4, 5 (1951-1955) 1959
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Political Systems Of Pastoral Tuareg In Air And Ahaggar.

By JOHANNES NICOLAISEN

The Tuareg are Berber-speaking, nomadic stock-breeders who live in an extensive area of the Western Sahara and adjacent regions of the Sudan. The territory dominated by the Tuareg lies between 14° and 30° North Latitude and between 5° West Longitude and 10° East Longitude. They fall into seven main groups or major political units (fig. 1) comprising 240,000–300,000 individuals, their negro slaves excluded. The two northernmost groups (the Kel Ahaggar and the Kel Ajjer) live in the true desert country and number less than 10,000 or about 3% of all Tuareg. In Ahaggar the number according to statistics of 1950 is 4,611. The Air Tuareg further south are more numerous and seem to comprise more than 20.000 individuals (cf. Lhote 1947, p. 15f. & 1955, p. 157).

This study of Tuareg political systems has as its foundation a part of my own field material collected in 1951 (in Ahaggar), 1952 (in Tassili-n-Ajjer), 1953 (in Ahaggar), and 1954–55 (in Ahaggar including Ahnet, and in Air). I have spent about two years in these Tuareg countries living most of the time in Ahaggar and adjacent regions, while my stay further south in Air was limited to six months.

It is my intention here to describe the political systems of Air and Ahaggar, but as my final task is concerned with their origin I find it necessary to take up also more general aspects of Tuareg culture and the distribution of certain cultural traits. I shall make use also of Tuareg oral traditions and of the very comprehensive material on Tuareg history gathered by Arab historians and geographers of the Middle Ages. Thus I do not follow the ordinary lines of any particular anthropological school.

I am much indebted to Dr. Birket-Smith (University of Copenhagen) from whom I acquired my general anthropological knowledge together with a keen interest in historical problems, and to Professor Daryll Forde and Dr. Phyllis Kaberry of the London University where I have learnt what I know about social anthropology. Dr. Phyllis Kaberry has taken a profound interest in my studies, and I feel grateful for her kind help and assistance in all matters concerning Tuareg political systems and Tuareg social structure in general.

My journeys among the Tuareg were carried out by means of grants from various Danish foundations, notably Statens Almindelige Videnskabsfond, Carlsberg Fondet, Knud Rasmussen Fondet, and Jens Lohmand Rasmussens Rejselegat. During my last journey The University College London assigned me a grant without which I should not have been able to gather the material here presented

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Tuareg Invasions into Air.

The connection between the Mediterranean and the Sudan by means of caravans through the Sahara is of very great but unknown age. Caravans have crossed the Sahara as far back as historical knowledge reaches (cf. Bates 1914, p. 101 ff. – Gsell 1920–28, I–VIII – Bovill 1958, p. 24). At the beginning donkeys and oxen were probably used as beasts of burden and the latter animals were employed also as draught animals for carriages as were horses at a later date (cf. Lhote 1953, p. 1138–1228). With the introduction of the camel, caravan trading through the desert was no doubt highly intensified. For although donkeys and also oxen can cross the Sahara in winter without much difficulty camels are better suited to desert journeys.

The first Tuareg who came to Air may have been caravan traders attracted by the excellent grazing grounds of this country. When they arrived we do not know but it seems possible to follow in broad outline the history of the Air Tuareg a thousand years back in time and to distinguish between several invasions. It must be admitted that these cannot be precisely dated and that our historical knowledge is on the whole very fragmentary. It is derived partly from oral traditions, partly from written historical sources among which the so-called Agadez Chronicle is of particular value. It consists of various Arabic manuscripts in the care of the Sultan of Agadez. They have been published in translation and abstracts (Palmer 1910; 1928; 1936. – Urvoy 1934). Several authors have made valuable contributions to the history of the Air Tuareg (Barth 1857, I. – Rodd 1926a, 1926b, 1938. – Palmer 1936. – Urvoy 1936. – Nicolas 1950a; 1950b), but to my mind the best general account is given by Urvoy whom I follow in outline.

As early as the 7th century A.D. extensive migrations of pastoral Berbers including the two important tribal groups of Lemta and Zaṛaoua passed through the desert. The Lemta settled around the Niger and gave rise to the Sonṛai Empire, while the Zaṛaoua reached the Lake Tchad country where the state of Kanem-Bornou was created. At this time pastoral Berbers also arrived in Air where new states were created. The name of one of them is known, namely the Hausa state of Gober or Gobir which existed in Air up to the 12th century A.D.

New invasions took place in the following centuries. The ancestors of the clans of Igdalen (now in Tegama and Damergou south of the massif) and Iberkhoreen (now in Azaoua north of Tahoua) have probably immigrated before the year 1000 A.D. as may also be the case of the Kel Tamgak clan in Northern Air.

As mentioned the excellent grazing grounds of Air were probably the reason for the first Tuareg invasions. From the 11th century A.D. another factor seems to have been responsible, namely the arrival in North Africa of the Arab bedouins of Beni Hilal and Beni Soleim. Nomads of the latter group invaded the Tuareg countries of Tripolitania and Fezzan (Ibn Khaldoun, I, p. 134 ff.) with the result that Tuareg clans migrated southwards to Air. Among them was a group of seven clans (Itesen, Ijadaranein, Ifadalen, Tamaḳou'at, Tamaga'azellet, Iza'aran, and

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Clans	Number of Individuals & Households (Nicolas 1950b)	Notes	Traditional Grazing Grounds
Ifadeyen (2 clans)			Kouroubobo Imechamebouan
Igetofen			Torouf Beinabo Ti-n-Daouine Anialen Abdemma Ekaouel
Iraouelen			Tombalaga Akadanei Merigaouei
Elbaraten			Onouachor
Itagan			Eleleg
Isakaranen	653 107		Ti-n-Tebezgin
Kel Tedale (3 clans)	1300	They may be noble by origin.	Talak Ourarene Zourika
Kel Akarra	164 39	Said to be of noble origin and to have had the Ibararochiten clan as their particular vassals.	Ti-n-Teborak
Ibararochchiten		Said to have been the particular vassals of the Kel Akarra clan.	Emdegra

grounds round Agadez in the 17th century, and were probably called to this region by a Sultan who needed them to keep order in the country. The actual power then passed into the hands of the Kel Ferouan drum-chief.

The Kel Ferouan Tuareg.

Lists of clans which belong to the Kel Ferouan drum-group have already been published. Jean has fourteen clans in his list (Jean 1909, p. 104), Rodd and Abadie have fifteen (Rodd 1926a, p. 427f. – Abadie 1927, p. 391f.), while Nicolas refers twenty-two clans to the group (Nicolas 1950b, p. 474f., 480). My own list comes close to that of Nicolas but contains a few additional names which however may refer to sections of the other clans. In my list I have indicated the relationship between the clans and their traditional grazing grounds. I have not been able to get precise particulars about the size of clans, and I therefore quote the figures

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given by Nicolas (Nicolas 1950b, p. 474f.). The clans differ greatly in size ranging from 653 to 42 individuals. The average figure for a clan is about 250.

A clan is generally termed *taousit* which seems to have the meaning of "a palm from which fingers issue". Many clans have an ancestress whose name is known to the members. The Kel Ferouan Tuareg however have very little genealogical knowledge. They rarely know their kinsmen more than three or four generations back, and they cannot trace the relationship between all clan members and their ancestress. Traditionally a clan is a group of matrilineally related persons, but there is nowadays a strong tendency to acknowledge the patrilineal principle for clan-membership. A more detailed description of Tuareg clans will be given in the later chapter on the Ahaggar Tuareg.

To-day the Air Tuareg live most of the year in camps consisting of three to five barrel-vaulted tents covered with mats (fig. 5 & 13). The inhabitants of these small camps generally form an extended family, e.g.,

1) husband, wife, married sons, and their children.
2) two brothers, their wives, married sons, and their children.
3) a brother and a sister together with their spouses and children.
4) husband, wife, unmarried children, husband's mother and mother's sister, and his sister's daughter with her husband.

In the rainy season *(akasa)* and in the beginning of the following dry season *(tarat)* several small camps of extended families may camp together. The only reason for this is said to be that kinsmen appreciate each other's company. I have myself never seen such big camps. During my visit to Air 1955 the annual pastures were not so well developed as to allow the concentration of many domestic animals in one and the same place. It is said that camps in the past were bigger than nowadays. The Air Tuareg were then constantly running the risk of being raided by pastoral Arabs, Tebu, or Tuareg from other groups.

Clan-endogamy is claimed an ideal by many Air Tuareg, but exogamous marriages are common and have occured also in the past. The members of two clans hold that they have intermarried since the remote date of their establishment. They claim descent from a brother and a sister who married two cross-cousins, and the preferred type of marriage among the Kel Ferouan Tuareg is in fact that to a cross-cousin – ideally to a mother's brother's daughter. This may be seen from the composition of 38 marriages which were as follows:–

Mother's brother's daughter	7
Father's sister's daughter	4
Classificatory cross-cousins	6
Other kinswomen	13
No blood-relationship between husband and wife	8
Marriages total	38

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114 My gratitude to Dr. Phyllis Kaberry, who acted as my supervisor during my London studies, is not easily expressed in words. Nobody has taken so profound an interest in my studies as Dr. Kaberry, and if my descriptions of economics and political systems contain views of any value this is due largely to her extreme interest in my Tuareg material. Much of my later field-work among the Tuareg has also been carried out along lines suggested by Dr. Kaberry.

My stay in London was indeed a fruitful one as I was also able to attend lectures and seminars by Professor Raymond Firth and Professor I. Schapera, and to benefit from the rich knowledge of East African cultures possessed by Mr. G. W. B. Huntingford of The School of Oriental and African Studies.

121 I try to reconstruct history within the limited area of Northern Africa occupied by the Tuareg. In
● [127] doing so I use methodologies of different anthropological schools, and also include material available from written sources, from Tuareg traditions, and from archaeology. I feel confident that my procedure is justified, but present it to the reader's judgement with a quotation from the great anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard, who speaks about the rejection of the reconstruction of history by functional anthropologists as follows: "A case can be made out for this rejection, though not in my opinion so strong a case as is usually supposed, for all history is of necessity a reconstruction, the degree of probability attending a particular reconstruction depending on the evidence available" (Evans-Pritchard 1962, p. 21).

114 The real foundation of my book is the field-material I have been able to gather during eight journeys
122 to Northern Africa. I made the first two short trips on my own account, while later journeys were paid by Danish foundations, notably by *Statens Almindelige Videnskabsfond, Carlsbergfondet, Rask-Ørsted Fondet, Knud Rasmussen Fondet*, and by grants from the University of Copenhagen. I have also been supported economically by The Danish National Museum and by The Museum of Prehistory in Aarhus, which museums now contain my collections of ethnographical specimens. My first Tuareg journey carried out in 1951 owes its beginning to economic and moral support from the former leader of the Aarhus Museum, Professor P. V. Glob, now Director-General of the Central Office and of the Museum of National Antiquities in Denmark. My journey to the Tuareg of Ahaggar and Ayr 1954–55 was partly paid by The University College London on the very kind initiative of Professor Daryll Forde.

122 I express my sincere thanks to the above-mentioned institutions and their directors.

The results achieved on my journeys are due largely to friendly help rendered me by the Algerian administration and the administration of the Niger Republic in Niamey and at Agadez. In Algeria I met at an early date Mr. Pierre Bataillon and Mr. Josef Kniebihly of the Civil Administration at Djelfa. They willingly offered me their friendship and did everything to help me during the three weeks of 1947 when I suffered very greatly from malaria. On my journeys to the Ayr Tuareg I have been very kindly assisted by all governmental offices, and I thank heartily Mr. G. Feral, formerly civil governor of the Cercle d'Agadez, Mr. J. Demonceau, Mr. Claude Gardin, and Mr. and Mrs. Bernus of the IFAN at Niamey.

My two Danish friends, Niels Wismer, Norwegian Vice-Consul in Algeria, and Clas Wismer have been of outstanding importance for all my journeys among North African pastoralists. They supported me morally and practically every time I came to Algiers, and they gave me their friendship which I treasure most highly.

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I also acknowledge with grateful thanks the valuable help of the Danish Consulate of Algeria under the leadership of the Vice-Consul, Mr. E. Hartvig.

The valuable North African collections preserved in the Musée de l'homme, Paris, Musée d'Ethnographie et de Préhistoire du Bardo, Algiers, and in the Musée de la ville de Neuchâtel have been of extreme importance to my studies, and I wish to thank sincerely the directors of these museums for their kindness in allowing me free admission to all interesting objects. I thank the Musée de l'homme for its courtesy in permitting me to reproduce the illustrations Figs. 62, 75 & 88. For the photograph Fig. 254 I am indebted to the courtesy of Dr. Erik Smidt, Copenhagen.

Anthropology necessitates co-operation with many other sciences, and this I have often experienced when working on my book. I wish to thank sincerly my friend Mr. K.-G. Prasse for his readiness to let me benefit from his profound knowledge of all structural problems connected with Tuareg language and other Berber dialects. He has kindly undertaken the work of checking the spelling of Tuareg words used in this book, and I owe him much for discussions about the meanings of such Tuareg words that may be important from a culture-historical viewpoint. I also thank my friend Dr. Hans Helback of The Danish National Museum for his assistance on problems connected with cultivated plants, and the veterinary surgeon Mr. Niels Grunnet for his comments on Tuareg stock-diseases.

I wrote this book in English which was kindly corrected by Major C. L. Bayliss of The British Embassy in Denmark. As to the drawing of diagrams, maps, etc., they are made by Mr. Arne Morell Nielsen whose readiness to help a friend is unrivalled.

The book was written mainly during eight months of 1961 and nobody has rendered me so much real help as my wife Ida.

I cannot in this way convey my heart-felt thanks to Tuareg friends, but my thoughts are among them with my brothers of the Aguh-en-tehlé and the Imezzureg tribes.

Copenhagen, June 1963

JOHANNES NICOLAISEN

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to visit Niamey for one week at the beginning of December 1962. Here I studied the very valuable ethnographical collections of The IFAN Museum, and I spent two days in camps of *Bella* and Tuareg of the *Western Iwllemmeden* east and north-east of Ayoru on the Niger. Of particular value was my visit to a camp of the dominant noble tribe, *Kel Tahabanat*. Its supreme chief *Amder* and his family gave me important information on Tuareg culture in this little known area. My visit to Tuareg and *Bella* near Ayoru was made possible by the very kind assistance of Mr. and Mrs. Bernus of the IFAN. They put a truck with its driver at my free disposition.

Altogether I have spent almost three years among North African pastoralists – mainly among the Tuareg. This length of time is not so impressive as it may seem, for my investigations have been carried out over an extensive territory ranching from the Mediterranean to the outskirts of the Sudanese savannah. A detailed study of Tuareg ecology and culture necessitates a detailed knowledge of change and variation in environment within and without the country in which the Tuareg live.

The literature which deals with the Tuareg is very comprehensive as can be seen from the bibliography at the end of this book, but most publications are of very little value and many of them are almost inaccessible.

The Tuareg are first mentioned in literature by Arab authors of the Middle Ages, but most of these historians and geographers did not know the Tuareg country and even the few of them who travelled in the Sahara tell us very little about the Tuareg in early Arabic texts generally called *Muletthemin*, that is "the veiled ones". The most important Arab authors who mention the Tuareg are Ibn Hawkal (10th century), El-Bekri (11th century), Edrisi (12th century), Ibn Batutah (14th century), and Ibn Khaldun (14th century). Ibn Khaldun gives the most intimate description of the Tuareg though apparently he never met them. But they played a very important part in his attempt to recount the ancient history of the North African Berbers. After Ibn Khaldun came Leo Africanus (16th century) who published information gathered by himself on journeys in the Sahara. His book was first published in Italian. There are certain later Arab authors who have contributed to our knowledge of North African cultures and the Tuareg, e.g., Es-Sadi who lived in the 17th century. We must also mention in this connection that there are other valuable Arabic manuscripts, notably those generally referred to as the Agadez Chronicle, which contain much historical material on the Ayr Tuareg (cf. Palmer 1910; 1928; 1936; Urvoy 1934).

The first modern description of the Tuareg was given by Hornemann who travelled from Cairo to Murzuk in 1798. Throughout the 19th century many European travellers contributed to our knowledge of the Tuareg, and it is very important now to have their accounts which derive from a time when traditional political systems were unaffected by European colonization. Among these travellers we should mention such outstanding names as Lyon, Caillié, Denham & Clapperton & Oudney, Richardson, Barth, Duveyrier, Rohlfs, Hourst, Foureau, and von Bary. Lyon gives a very valuable description of the Tuareg who live around Tasilé-n-Ajjer, but by far the most important among these authorities are Barth, who wrote about the *Kel Ajjer*, the *Kel Ayr*, and the *Iwllemmeden*, and Duveyrier, who published an excellent monograph on the Northern Tuareg with particular reference to the Tuareg of Tasilé-n-Ajjer. At the beginning of the present century military posts were established in the Sahara, and literature about the Tuareg became more abundant. Thus Benhazera wrote a good book on

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are also very akin to the Tuareg in culture, but have preserved some Arab traits of material culture and their traditional social organization in addition to their language, though they also know *tamahaq*. We are here concerned only with traits adopted into Tuareg culture from contact with the Arabs.

In the description of Tuareg culture I have already pointed out many cultural traits due to Arab influence. I have mentioned such traits in connection with food-preparation (p. 232, 237 ff, 247 ff) and dress (p. 303 f.). I have also mentioned the introduction of cultivation methods and cultivated plants owing to contact with Arabs and the Arabic-speaking *Harratin* (p. 186 ff.), and I have stated that it seems as if new types or new breeds of domestic animals were introduced to North Africa by the invading Arabs. Cats and domestic pigeons seem to be post-Arabian in the Sahara (p. 115 f.), the true grey-hound came to Tuareg country with the Arabs, who also introduced the particular horse-breed known as the *Aryen* type (p. 113). Doutressoulle relates a native tradition to the effect that this breed came to the Begzen Mountains with Arabs of Tripolitania (Doutressoulle 1947, p. 238 f., 242). Horses of this breed are introduced to Ayr from the north even to-day, but as far as I know the Ayr Tuareg and the Hausa-speaking *Imeggedezen* do not use the Arab type of saddle or the very broad stirrups typical of the northern horse-riding Arabs. They generally use very narrow stirrups for the insertion of one or two toes. These stirrups were possibly introduced to the Western Sudan with the Dongolawi breed. It came from Upper Egypt at the end for the 13th century A.D. when the *Djoheyna* Arabs immigrated (Mauny 1961, p. 283).

I have mentioned above (p. 54 ff.) that there are two main types of camels among the Northern Tuareg:— (1) a northern Arab breed (*marroki*) characterized by heavy stature and a thick covering of wool, and (2) a southern breed more slenderly built and with little or no wool – a breed which is typical to the Tuareg. Medieval Arab authors have stated that the Tuareg possessed camels of a particular breed well fitted for riding (Ibn Khaldun II, p. 70, 105; Edrisi, p. 11, 67 f., 144 f.; Leo Africanus p. 940 f.). The division of camels into two distinct types of the above characteristics can be traced elsewhere in Northern Africa, where the heavy woolly breed is found mainly in the north and particularly among Arabs, while the slender non-woolly breed is common among such pastoralists as the Tuareg, the Moors of Mauretania (who are largely of Tuareg stock and have a great many Berber words in their camel vocabulary, according to Monteil 1952), the Tebu, and the Beja tribes around the Nile (cf. Cauvet 1925, I, p. 79 ff.; Doutressoulle 1947, p. 272 ff.; Nachtigal 1879, I, p. 415 f.; Murray 1935, p. 92 ff.). The distinction between the two main types cannot apparently be explained by the different environmental conditions, for they frequently live within the same type of environment, and the northern *marroki* type is found particularly among Arabs, and not only among the Arabs of the northern desert. *Marroki*-like camels seem to exisi among such Arab tribes as the *Kunta* and the *Berabich* north of the Niger Bend in the Azawad desert (Doutressoulle 1947, p. 273), among the camel-breeding Arabs of the Lake Tchad region, and among Arab pastoralists of the former Anglo-Egyptian Sudan – particularly among the Kababish (Cauvet 1925–26, I, p. 80 ff., 83 f.). There seem to be little doubt that the *marroki* camel came to North Africa with the Arabs and it is then natural to investigate whether they also introduced particular cultural traits connected with camel-breeding. It is relatively easy to take up such an investigation with reference to particular saddle types, because they are frequently described and depicted in literature.

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Fodder Plants of Ahaggar

The most valuable fodder plants in Ahaggar are mentioned in the lists below where my own material has been supplemented with information collected by Maire and published in his valuable study of vegetation of the Central Sahara (Maire 1933 & 1940). The abridgements *Tr.*, *L.M.*, and *U.M.* refer to Maire's botanical zones:— the *Tropical Zone*, the *Lower Mediterranean Zone*, and the *Upper Mediterranean Zone*, while the letters *a*, *b*, and *p* stand for "annual", "biennial", and "perennial" plants.

FODDER PLANTS OF CAMELS, SHEEP, AND GOATS

tahlé (*Typha elephantina*). Tr. p. Young shoots eaten by sheep and goats. Generally not eaten by camels. Maire gives similar information (Maire 1933, p. 52).

ébestew (*Imperata cylindrica*). Tr., L.M. p. Not much eaten by camels (Maire 1933, p. 54).

ézereg (*Rottboellia hirsuta*). Tr. p. "Excellent pâturage en hiver, tant pour les chameaux que pour les ovins, caprins et autres herbivores (Voinot)" (Maire 1933, p. 54).

téherimt (*Andropogon laniger*). Tr., L.M. p. "Cette plante est mangée par les chameaux" (Maire 1933, p. 55).

aïezu (*Panicum turgidum*). Tr., L.M. p. Very important fodder plant for all animals – particularly when green. The green grass is cut by the Tuareg who give it to their riding camels resting in the camp. – "La plante est un élément important de la nourriture des chameaux" (Maire 1933, p. 58).

talenfezut (*Pennisetum dichotomum*). Tr. a. & p. (cf. Gram 1935, p. 57). "Cette plante est mangée par tous les herbivores domestiques" (Maire 1933, p. 58).

aremmud (*Aristida plumosa*). Tr. a. & p. According to Gram perennial (Gram 1935, p. 54), according to Maire generally annual in the Central Sahara, while perennial in the Northern Sahara (Maire 1933, p. 61). An important fodder plant for all animals. – "Elle constitue un excellent fourrage pour les chameaux" (Maire 1933, p. 61).

tulluli (*Aristida pungens*). Tr. p. Found in lower parts of the tropical zone, particularly on the northern outskirts of Ahaggar (including Ahnet) and in Tassilé-n-Ajjer. A very important fodder plant for all domestic animals. The Tuareg cut it green, or dry, to use it as fodder for their camels on caravan journeys through barren desert country (e.g., on journeys from Ahaggar to Tidikelt). – "Elle constitue, particulièrement au moment de la floraison, un excellent fourrage pour les chameaux et les autres herbivores domestiques" (Maire 1933, p. 62).